

TRIBUTE TO CHARLES HILLARD BLACKBURN

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I come tonight with a sad heart. A very close and dear friend of mine, Chuck Hillard Blackburn passed away last week at the age of 83. I was saddened, Mr. Speaker, because I was here doing the people's business in the people's House, that I was unable to go to pay my respects to such a fine American.

There was something about Chuck that was very unusual. Chuck was a Republican. He loved being in the Republican Party. But after he met me and he joined forces with me, he changed his affiliation from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party and started working with me in my endeavors as I started early on running for the Carson City Council, on to the State legislature, and then here to Congress.

In all three of those runs, Mr. Speaker, he was there for me. He managed my office. He made sure that the phone banks were covered. One could not have found an any more endearing person than Chuck Blackburn.

Chuck often spoke about growing up in his State of Ohio, City of Springfield and, as a boy, how he enjoyed being with his father fishing and doing some of the great things that boys and fathers have a great relationship with. Then he moved to California. Again, enjoying his grandchildren, he did some of those same things that he had done with his father with his grandchildren.

But I do not want to ignore the fact that Chuck served this country in three wars. A great veteran he was, always giving patriotism to this country, having served it very well.

During his 27 years in the military, he often talked about the many strides and struggles and the many times that he had to go on the battlefield. But he did not regret, not a single bit of it, because he loved this country. Chuck Blackburn was an American who absolutely felt that being an American was the greatest thing in the world.

Then after coming out of the military, having served for 27 years, he became a manager with the Kelly Services and was the manager there for 10 years, after which he began to just do voluntary things there in the city of Carson.

That is when he joined forces with me. From that point on, he was my friend, my devoted constituent, my really true trustworthy friend whom I could always depend on as I ran the campaigns.

He was in the La Bon Temps social club, and it was a club where men would dress each year in their fine after-6 attire and have ballroom dancing and parties. He was known as a guy

who was very soft on his feet or very smooth on his feet. He did the ballroom dancing like no one could. I can see him now with his tall slinky body, handsomely dressed in this tux, waltzing across the floor with his wife Eugenia, a great man, handsome man, a very great American.

He attended the church of the Holy Communion with his wife, Eugenia, for many years. They were married some 24 years. In their years of marriage, they sought to have all of their grandchildren baptized here at the Church of the Holy Communion. Upon his death, that church was the place in which a memorial service was done for him.

We will miss Chuck, a great guy, a true friend, a great American, a great patriot. But the one thing that I can say for him, that he loved this country. He loved the people, his neighbors, and he loved this congresswoman. I certainly cannot say enough for the fine gentleman he was. I will sorely miss him as we gear up for this election come the year 2000. But I know wherever Chuck is now, and I certainly will presume he is in heaven or assume he is, that he is saying, "Now, you just go girl, because you have got to win this reelection. I am going to be there in spirit to make sure that those phone banks are covered, that those who come to volunteer will sign in, and that you will have victory come November of the year 2000." Good-bye Chuck.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SHOWS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

LAND MINES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to support increased investment in assistance to persons affected by land mines.

As many of my colleagues are aware, Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan will be making her first official visit to Capitol Hill tomorrow in her capacity as International Patron of the Land Mine Survivors Network to bring awareness to the devastation caused by land mines around the world.

More than 60 countries are infested with land mines and have the potential of killing or maiming innocent civilians, male and female, adult and child. Every 20 minutes, another life is devastated by a anti-personnel Land Mine.

Designed to maximize suffering and terrorize populations, land mines are truly indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction in slow motion. They cannot tell the difference between the footfall of a soldier or a child at play.

Although the cost of producing a Land Mine is as little as \$3, the injuries suffered by innocent civilians cannot be cured with a price tag. More than 80 percent of Land Mine victims are civilians who must deal with the physical, psychological, and social ramifications of being prey to the damage of a Land Mine.

The proliferation of mines is a global and man-made epidemic. It is also an American problem, having affected more than 100,000 Americans. One such American is Jerry White, co-founder of the Land Mine Survivors Network. While traveling as a college student in Israel, Jerry stepped on a Land Mine, lost his leg, and joined the ranks of the more than 300,000 and growing Land Mine survivors.

Unlike Jerry, however, fewer than 10 percent of Land Mine victims have access to proper medical treatment and rehabilitation. Even fewer have the necessary support to effectively return to the social and economic mainstream.

I urge my colleagues to support the efforts of Queen Noor, Jerry White, and the Land Mine Survivors Network to bring awareness to this important issue and to provide a voice to those survivors who do not have the opportunity or ability to speak for themselves.

Let us walk into the next century, Mr. Speaker, with honor and hope for a Land Mine-free world. Let us work together to ensure that all countries offer the support and tools needed for persons injured by antipersonnel mines to reclaim their lives and become productive and contributing members of our society.

SENIOR CITIZENS NEED ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Speaker, this evening, I rise to address this House because our senior citizens can no longer afford the prescription drugs that they need to have a decent life. That is the simple truth.

PhRMA, the Pharmaceutical Research Manufacturers of America, has formed a bogus consumer group called Citizens for Better Medicare and hired a Republican ad agency to front a \$20 million to \$30 million campaign to distort the truth about prescription drugs and senior citizens.

The American Association of Retired Persons spokesperson was right when he told the New York Times "This phony coalition created and financed by the pharmaceutical industry is what we have come to expect from the drug companies over the last decade."

□ 1945

Fundamentally, they are in favor of the status quo, which leaves millions of

older Americans without drug coverage. Helping our senior citizens is a moral issue, and the American public is not going to roll over for \$30 million.

Last week, the Citizens for Better Medicare released a study claiming the administration's proposal to provide seniors with prescription drug coverage could lead to employers dropping prescription drug benefits for retirees. However, pharmaceutical manufacturers have been leading the way in increasing prices and forcing employers to stop offering retiree prescription drug benefits. From 1981 to 1999, the cost of prescription drugs increased by 306 percent, while the Consumer Price Index rose only 99 percent.

The cost of prescription drugs continues to skyrocket. The Health Care Financing Administration reports that spending for prescription drugs rose 14.1 percent in 1997, compared to a 4.8 percent increase for health care services overall.

The members of PhRMA are by far the most profitable companies anywhere. Their profits exceed the research and development costs for most large pharmaceutical companies. The drug companies' report claims that employers who currently provide prescription drug benefits for retirees could choose to quit offering the benefit and save money by paying the former employees' Medicare premiums for prescription drugs. However, the proposal that they are criticizing would subsidize employers for continuing to offer their employees a private sector benefit.

There is also nothing forcing employers to offer retiree health benefits, including prescription drugs, to retirees now. And if those benefits have more value than a Medicare benefit, they will have the same incentives to continue offering the benefit. What the pharmaceutical companies are not telling senior citizens is that their doomsday scenario is already becoming a reality because of their own actions.

The fictional character the drug companies have invented for their ads, called Flo, says she has a private sector drug benefit as part of her retirement plan. In real life, only 24 percent of the population on Medicare has meaningful private sector coverage for prescription drugs.

Between 1994 and 1998, 25 percent of the firms that offered health benefits to their retirees quit providing coverage. It just cost too much. Among the largest employers, companies that employ more than 5,000 people, over a third have dropped coverage. One of the most significant reasons employers are dropping coverage is that they can no longer afford to pay the increasingly high cost manufacturers charge for prescription drugs.

Short of that, it is critical that they have access to prescription drugs at a reasonable price. The senior citizens in the District that I am fortunate to represent, and in every district, know that they are simply being robbed. Senior

citizens across the country expect every Member of Congress to address this situation.

Drug companies say uninsured Americans should pay twice as much as their preferred customers and considerably, two to three times as much, more than people in other countries so the international drug companies located in America will continue to invest in research and development. We know we have to have research and development.

The high prices they charge Americans make them the most profitable industry in the world. The industry's profits as a percent of sales are nearly five times, five times, that of the average Fortune 500 company. I have a chart here this evening that shows what percent of various countries' health care expenditures go to developing new prescription medications. The United States is not at the top of the list, as my colleagues can see. The United Kingdom, Japan, France, Italy, and Germany all invest more than the United States in developing new prescriptions.

Addressing the issues of cost and affordability for prescription drugs, as well as finding a reasonable approach to offering drug coverage to Medicare recipients, are important priorities. Pharmaceutical companies need to stop throwing money away creating fictional characters and invest more in creating legitimate new medicines. The American public and this Congress are simply not for sale. We are going to do everything we can to ensure that our senior citizens are treated fairly.

It is absolutely amazing, Mr. Speaker, that this has continued; that we have placed our senior citizens, so many of them, in a position where they have to make a decision whether or not to buy food or buy their medicine on a daily basis. If it just cost that much, then so be it. But the fact is our senior citizens in this country are charged two to three times as much as anyone else in the world for this medicine. We are simply allowing the pharmaceutical manufacturers to take advantage of our senior citizens and, Mr. Speaker, it is time to stop.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my Colleagues this evening for this special order on Prescription Drug Coverage. I am an original cosponsor of H.R. 664, the Prescription Coverage for Seniors Act and I participated in an event a few weeks ago in Houston to release an international study on the high costs of prescriptions in the Houston area.

This issue is very important to everyone, not just senior citizens. We all know at least one person who has had difficulty obtaining prescriptions due to the cost. Senior citizens happen to be the most vulnerable.

In addition to the legislation that has been introduced here in Congress, there is the President's proposal to reform Medicare that includes a prescription drug component. These proposals have been under attack recently by the ad campaign that features a woman named "Flo."

These Flo ads are misleading because they give the impression that Flo is a concerned senior citizen. She falsely accuses these proposals of interfering in her medicine cabinet—that big government just won't leave her alone.

Although these ads are convincing, they are untrue. The problem is not big government in people's medicine cabinets. The problem is the insurance industry, the largest and most profitable industry in the country. This industry has put these ads out there to fool people into believing that they are not the problem.

These ads may be convincing to some, but many people understand the importance of some form of prescription drug coverage. We know that there are people who do not have insurance at all and prescription coverage would at least help them to have access to beneficial medication.

As I stated earlier, this is a major problem for the elderly, but this is also a major concern for people who have become disabled. My office received a call today from a woman who worked for many years as a teacher before she was stricken with cancer. She had insurance coverage through her husband's plan, but she was dropped shortly after he passed away.

In addition to the agony of battling cancer, she also has congestive heart failure. She was prescribed medication for these conditions, but unfortunately, she cannot afford them.

She called my office because she hoped to offer her story as a human account of the lack of coverage for prescription drugs. She hopes that her story will spur us to action before it is too late.

Although this woman is not a senior citizen, she is disabled and is unable to work. Her insurance company dropped her from coverage and she has had to struggle to get her prescriptions. This situation should not occur in the United States.

In this country, no one should have to make the choice to live without life-saving prescription drugs. We have the resources to ensure that people eat every day, so there is no reason why we have citizens who live at the mercy of the insurance industry.

We have created some of the best medications and treatments in the world, but if our citizens cannot afford them, then these treatments are useless.

Again, I would like to thank my Colleagues for sponsoring this special order tonight. It is important that we tell the American people the truth about the "Flo" ad campaign.

More importantly, it is important for us to hear the stories of Americans who have had to make agonizing decisions about living with the fear of further illness or even death because of the high cost of prescription drugs.

The proposals that provide for prescription drug coverage, such as H.R. 664 and the President's plan need serious attention if we are committed to an enhanced quality of life for seniors and the disabled. I urge my Colleagues to support these lifesaving measures for our most vulnerable citizens.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the topic of my special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin). Is there objection